



Air Combat Command NEWS SERVICE

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B-1 consolidation begins

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DYESS AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (ACCNS) -- A year after the B-1 consolidation plan was first announced, people here are seeing the first steps taking shape.

The plan, announced June 2001 by Air Force officials, calls for the B-1 fleet to be reduced by more than 30 aircraft and consolidates it at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., and Dyess. The other three bases where B-1s were assigned have already ceased bomber operations. McConnell AFB, Kan., and Robins AFB, Ga., have begun transferring aircraft to Ellsworth and Dyess. All seven of the B-1s that were originally at Mountain Home AFB, Idaho, have already moved to Ellsworth.

"The consolidation effort is on track at Dyess; it's going well, and we're handling any pop-up issues as they come," said Col. Mike Moeller, commander of the 7th Operations Group here.

Signs the consolidation is underway include the presence of planes previously assigned to Georgia and Kansas. Another visible change is the recent addition of two units to the base. Detachment 1 of the U.S. Air Force Weapons School and Detachment 2 of the 53rd Test and Evaluation Group transferred here from Ellsworth. The detachments train B-1 instructors and perform B-1 operational tests and evaluations. The move to Dyess consolidates all B-1 aircrew training here.

"Once complete, Dyess will truly be the center of B-1 training and combat excellence," Moeller said.

Despite some facility construction delays, the transition to Dyess is going well for the new units.

"We've had a pretty smooth and seamless integration into our operations," said Capt. Andy Streicher, Det. 2 project officer. "Det. 1 has already flown its first sorties, and Det. 2 will be ready to start its first test flights next month. This is a valuable opportunity to get a new perspective at a new base with a new wing. We are really looking forward to the (future at Dyess)."

The B-1 consolidation plan calls for 12 Air National Guard B-1s to transfer to Dyess, Air Force officials said. Of the 52 planes that Dyess will then have in its fleet, 12 are slated to be stored at the Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Center at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz. Another eight will be sent to bases for static displays, including

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Ground crew members conduct a final check before launching a B-1B Lancer from Dyess Air Force Base, Texas. A plan to consolidate America's B-1 fleet has moved aircraft here from Robins AFB, Ga., and McConnell AFB, Kan., as well as two detachments from Ellsworth AFB, S.D. The consolidation plan, which reduces the fleet of Lancers to 60, will be completed by Oct. 1, 2003. (Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Bill Lincicome)

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one at the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio.

One display aircraft has already been sent to Mountain Home, and the first B-1 transfer to Davis-Monthan will begin later this year.

“All the '83 models are going, and that's true for most of the '84s,” Moeller said, describing how the base will decide which planes stay and which will go. “When we are done, we will have a standardized fleet (because they will be the latest models) with the lowest flight hours on them.”

The money saved with a smaller fleet will be invested into the defensive systems and weapons-modernization efforts, Air Force officials said. The next major upgrade, named Block E, will integrate the Wind Corrected Munitions Dispenser, the Joint Stand-off Weapon and the Joint Air-to-Surface Stand-off Missile systems into the B-1's arsenal. The upgrade also calls for new avionics computers. Testing on the upgrades began in December 2000.

“The consolidation will give us a fleet that is fully funded and completely combat-capable for the next 20 years,” Moeller said. “The bottom line for the consolidation is we will be better able to continue doing what we already do at Dyess – ensuring combat capability in the weapon system and training new aviators to use it.”

The consolidation plan is scheduled to be completed by Oct. 1, 2003.

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